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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000021

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV, DRL
COMMERCE FOR ITA JEAN KELLY
USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: UPDATE ON RELEASED POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: A. RANGOON 10

[B](#). 04 RANGOON 1612

[C](#). 04 RANGOON 1571 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#). (U) Summary: According to NLD sources, the GOB released about 20 political prisoners as part of an amnesty of 5,588 prisoners on January 2nd. Among those released were Zaw Thet Htwe (a journalist sentenced to death in 2003), two NLD MP-elects (including Ohn Kyaing, a famous journalist), two NLD members arrested after the May 30, 2003 attack on Aung San Suu Kyi, and two students in prison since the massive anti-government demonstrations of 1988. End summary.

[2](#). (SBU) As reported in ref A, in honor of Independence Day (January 4th) the SPDC ordered on January 2nd the release of 5,588 prisoners from around the country -- bringing the total number of releases since mid-November to 19,906 (ref C). Most of the prisoners were released after serving their full sentences with time off for good behavior. The NLD has told us that of those freed about 20 were imprisoned for their political activities.

[3](#). (U) Most notable among the latest released prisoners was U Zaw Thet Htwe, the editor of a sports newspaper "First Eleven," who was originally sentenced to death in 2003 for plotting against the government (his sentence was reduced in May 2004 to 3 years). In reality, many suspect he was arrested because he reported about GOB misuse of international sports funds. According to the NLD, the following political prisoners were freed in the latest tranche:

From Rangoon's Insein Prison:

- Zaw Thet Htwe
- Aung Myint (aka Pyapon Ni Lone Oo), a journalist and poet from Mandalay arrested in 2000.
- Mya Soe (aka Shwe Gyo), a Rangoon NLD Youth leader arrested in 2003.

From Magway Division's Thayet Prison:

- Kyaw Khin, a NLD MP-elect from Shan State arrested in 1996.
- Thein Tan, a NLD Mandalay Division Executive Committee member arrested in 1991.
- Myint Soe (aka Johnny, aka Kyaw Oo), a NLD Youth member from Rangoon arrested in 1990.

From Sagaing Division's Shwebo Prison:

- Aung Myint, a NLD member from Shwebo arrested in the aftermath of the regime's attack on Aung San Suu Kyi and her convoy on May 30, 2003.
- Khin Maung Latt, a NLD member from Shwebo arrested in the aftermath of the May 30, 2003 ambush.

From Bago Division's Taungoo Prison:

- Ohn Kyaing (aka Aung Wint), a NLD MP-elect from Mandalay and well-known journalist arrested in 1991.

From Mandalay's Myingyan Prison:

- Soe Thauang, a Rangoon university student arrested in 1997.
- Aung Myat (aka Aung Myat Htut), a Rangoon university student arrested in 1989.
- Maung Maung, a lawyer from Irrawaddy Division arrested in [1](#)1989.

From Bago Division's Shwedaung Prison:

- Pho Paw (aka Than Tin Oo), a student arrested during demonstrations on September 9, 1999 (9/9/99).
- Maung Maung (aka Hein Htet Aung), a student arrested on 9/9/99.
- Bala (aka Ye Kyaw Lin), a student arrested on 9/9/99.

From Sagaing Division's Katha Prison:

- Than Aung, arrested in 2003 for writing a welcome poster

for Aung San Suu Kyi during her travels.
From Kachin State's Myitkyina Prison:

- Myo Nyunt, from Rangoon.
- Thein Lwin, from Myitkyina, arrested in 1999.
- Than Naing, from Kachin State, arrested in 1999.

The GOB also released Saw Tin Soe, a Karen National Union member from Karen State arrested in 1983 and sentenced to death (later changed to 25 years) for attempted hi-jacking.
McMullen